

# THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

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## FULL DETAILS OF LATEST STAND BY THE DUTCH CHURCHES

We published last week the text of a statement read from the pulpits of the Dutch Reformed Church on May 16th protesting against the deportation of able-bodied Dutch to work in Germany.

Since publishing this we have learned that the protest was once more made in co-operation with the Roman Catholic Church, for in all Roman Catholic pulpits on that day a letter was read, signed by all the Dutch Catholic Bishops and worded with remarkable clarity and outspokenness. We print the full text of this important document:

"The Archbishop and Bishops of the Netherlands, to their clergy and faithful, blessings in the Lord.

"Beloved faithful,

"Ever heavier trials visit our country. A world outlook, which is diametrically opposed to Christianity, has been forced upon our people these last three years. In every sphere Nazism attempts to extend its influence and take control. Although Nazism remains the powerful master of the situation here, the spiritual power of resistance of the overwhelming majority of the Netherlands people is unbroken. This fills us with great consolation and faith in the future. Despite all suppression of those differently minded and the bait of various material advantages, the Netherlands people will never become Nazist if we remain but loyal to our ancestral faith. There is strength in faith. But, beloved faithful, though in virtue of our faith we are not afraid, yet we are filled with deep care and compassion because of the calamities which have struck our people and

because of worse calamities still threatening. We are not even thinking of the privations, which many of you are experiencing and which threaten to assume in some cases the character of dire want. Greater still is the suffering caused by deportation and forced employment abroad. How many families have been torn asunder! How much spiritual distress is suffered through this! To how many moral dangers are tens of thousands exposed from all sides! For how many, who built up in many years of exertion their own enterprises which are now being threatened with destruction, has the joy of living been destroyed!

"Now the limit has been reached. All able-bodied men who can be spared at all, will be deported. This is deportation on a larger scale than the Christian world has ever known. For such happenings we must go back to the times of the Babylonian exile, when God's people were carried off, which made the prophet Jeremiah exclaim: 'Ploratus et ululatus multus.' The lamentation is heard in Ramah. There is loud weeping and crying, Rachel weeps for her sons (Jeremiah 31, 15).

"Not only does deportation shock us, but also the horrible injustice, contrary to all human and divine laws. As shepherds of your souls, we may not be silent on what is being done to our people. Posterity would consider it our eternal shame if we viewed this injustice silently. The bishops' task is to stand for the right and condemn the wrong as wrong, otherwise they would fall short of their duty. If ever there was a nation not

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wanting war, it was the Netherlands nation. We were unprepared; we only defended our country when attacked. We had to do this because it was our duty, and because our country is dear to us. Though our country may be small, our love for it is as great as that of any people for theirs. Now the country is not only usurped, but a large part of its population is, in fact, being carried away forcibly. Our men have to work for their enemy.

"Initially it was said Netherlands must work abroad because there was neither bread nor work for them here. Now, as has been explicitly stated, they must work for Germany to assure a German victory. Here comes our conflict of conscience. According to the Fourth Commandment, we must honour and love our country and make sacrifices for it. Now we may not only do nothing for our country, but we are even forced, under the threat of heavy punishment, to help the enemy.

"Herein especially lies the injustice done to us, against which we raise our voice. Though it is being presented that it is the duty of all Christians to fight against Bolshevism, this is only a catch phrase. He who really desires to fight 'Godless Bolshevism,' so sharply condemned by the Pope, must not suppress Christianity by all manner of means, as it is done by Nazism, which indeed does not persecute it bloodily, but chokes its vitality. The Nazis in power do not even shrink from preventing the Church exercising care for the souls of her own children.

"When the putting to work of Netherlands in Germany was widely extended, endless negotiations took place with appointed authority to obtain consent for Dutch priests to accompany them abroad, in order to look after the religious interests of the Catholic Dutch workers. In vain; the negotiations led nowhere. No, beloved faithful, the only power of fighting Communism is not Nazism, but Christianity. For 'nobody may lay another foundation than that laid, which is Christ' (I Cor. 3, 11).

"In a previous Pastoral, we stated: We do not possess the means of force. But we beseech you to take refuge in God, and to search your inner hearts. Our people as such has not yet prayed in this awful time as it ought. If you do that, God will help you. This is not an empty phrase but the unfailing promise of God Himself. The Holy Father, in this tragic hour, has dedicated the Holy Church and the entire world to the immaculate heart of Mary and rouses us in this

month of May to a crusade of prayer. It is our last remedy. May the Virgin Mother, the Mother of Charity, help us."

Given at Utrecht on May 12, 1943, and read from the pulpits of all Roman Catholic Churches on Sunday May 16, 1943.

Signed: Dr. A. de Jong, Archbishop of Utrecht; P. A. W. Hopmans, Bishop of Breda; Dr. J. H. G. Lammens, Bishop of Roermond; J. P. Huibers, Bishop of Haarlem; W. Mutsaerts, Bishop of 's Hertogenbosch.

## THE DUTCH NAZI AT CHURCH

The Dutch Nazi paper *Zwarte Soldaat* (22.4.43) gives a story of a Church Service as seen by a Dutch Nazi who was among the worshippers. It betrays the naive simplicity of those who cannot understand why Christianity and Nazism are incompatible. We quote from the article:

"You have to overcome your natural reactions if you are a National Socialist and wish to go to church at the present time.

"If I go on my bicycle to church on a Spring morning I enjoy the peace of the fields, the green grass, the larks and the wonderful charm of the countryside. Once I get inside the church, I discover that I am one of the first arrivals. The peasants of my village have sacrificed the little money they have for their church and the big school of which they are so proud. It is the centre of their faith. They look on it as a sacred area. When they come into church you can see traces of their hard manual labour. Several of them start working at five o'clock in the morning and do not return till late in the evening. They have no time for recreation or for cultural concerns.

"In these conditions it is not surprising that the Pastor has an enormous influence both for good and evil. The faithful accept everything that comes from his mouth without question. Therefore we must reckon with the moral strength of the clergy in these days. The worshippers are not in any condition to understand the great world events of the times, so they have complete faith in their Pastor. They do not understand National Socialism. They have no idea what we want or what we don't want. They trust implicitly in their Pastor, who in his sermons scientifically maltreats National Socialism with the aid of the text of Scripture. No one thinks of contradicting the Pastor when he condemns National Socialism by the authority of the Word of God. I tried

to make our aged Pastor understand that National Socialism fights only against Communism, but he replied that in that case Communism was more important and deserved more respect.

"When I went to the church I noticed from the way in which the clergyman worded his prayers that something extraordinary was happening. He was praying that God would deliver our land and our people from foreign domination. He did this by using traditional phrases which I knew by heart.

"When you have had ten years' service in the Nazi Party you can see from their fanatical and compassionate expressions that they are meaning to stir up their parishioners. After the prayers and psalm they announce that there will be a retiring collection 'for all kinds of good Christian work.' One of these days you find that it is a collection for the Jews, one to which they attach great importance.

"Finally the clergyman reads, very solemnly, a letter from the Synod of the Hague, the purpose of which is to tell his parishioners that the misery of the Dutch people is very great because they are taking away our young people to put them in institutions of the New Order. You are told also that Pastors are suffering in concentration camps.

"As we went out of church a Civil Servant, who seemed to think our country was under pagan influences, asked me what I thought. Knowing that I should not achieve anything by a long argument, I said to him that six weeks of Bolshevism would cure them completely, and that I would like to hear the Pastor after these six weeks, if he still had the opportunity to speak.

"I hope that they will come to understand these things one day. There is plenty of goodwill among the faithful if only they could shake themselves loose from their democratic dream.

"As far as the great majority of Christians is concerned, you could suitably quote the proverb 'Grind up a fool with a pestle and mortar and you will not succeed in delivering him from his folly.'"

### SHORTAGE OF CLERGYMEN IN GERMANY

According to *Kristeligt Dagblad* (14.5.43), the Lutheran Bishop Meiser of Munich wrote recently about the shortage of clergy, which has been accentuated by the Nazi policy of calling up as many clergy as possible. It is

believed that this is being done with the deliberate intent of weakening the Church, especially the Confessional part of it. Bishop Meiser wrote, in a report sent by him to the Danish Committee for Inter-Church Aid:

"Religious life continues as before. We have much anxiety because of the mobilisation of our priests. We use substitutes who are more or less qualified. We are discussing the possibility of appointing laymen. The Synod of Jerusalem has expressed special gratitude to the wives of clergy who have replaced their husbands. They have rendered invaluable services in the parishes where they have become the centre of the whole work. They have continued their husbands' Ministry and have kept the parsonages going.

"The Church expects very difficult times for the Christian religion in Germany after the war. The lack of clergy will make itself felt because so many theological students have fallen in battle. According to the lists published in the parochial journals, it would appear that at least one falls every day."

### NAZI MARRIAGE CEREMONY

We have given recent examples of the substitute ceremonies which are being introduced by the Nazis to replace Christian Baptism and Christian Marriage.

The following quotation is taken from a recent German book entitled *The Marriage Ceremony*, by L. Lechner. We quote extracts from the preface, which explains the purpose of the book and gives one of the sample ceremonies set out in the volume.

#### From the Preface

"This work is intended to help all who have freed themselves from Christianity and wish to celebrate their marriage as true Germans, without the blessing of a priest. The man or woman whose passion is at its height regards the final union with his or her beloved as a festival, and the relations feel similarly.

"We are not dealing here with the problem of marrying or not marrying—that is a matter for the individual couples. The marriage ceremony is not a purely Christian custom, for our forefathers were acquainted with this festival long before Christianity was introduced into Germany. For the ancients it was a family festival, and that is what it is going to become once more for us. But in this period of transition *most of our fellow-countrymen who have left the church* still do not know how to organise such a ceremony. It is for such fellow-countrymen

as these that this collection of examples and suggestions is intended to provide the assistance of a comrade."

### Example

"This marriage ceremony is planned on a large scale and is intended for bridal couples who value highly as great an amount as possible of ceremony. The hall is decorated with a great many flowers and fir branches. Near the brazier, about a yard away, two or four girls have taken up their stand, torches in their hands. The torches are lit shortly before the entry of the bridal couple and are already burning when they enter the room. Behind the girls to the right and left two or four young comrades have placed themselves in a group as trumpeters. If these are unable to appear in uniform it is desirable that they should all wear the same costume, white shirts and dark trousers. The bridal couple are preceded into the room and up to their seats by children strewing flowers before them. During the whole ceremony the children remain standing at the right and left of the bridal couple. Fanfares are sounded as the bridal couple enter the hall where the celebration is being held.

"As the bridal couple seat themselves, the torchbearers standing at the right and left of the brazier light the fire and plunge their torches into the sand-box, as in Marriage Ceremony No. 1. When there are four torchbearers only the two girls standing nearest the brazier on the right and left light the fire simultaneously, the other two continuing to stand there with their torches burning.

"The girl to the right of the flames speaks:—

"Fire is the reflection of life.

Flame is a sacred picture.

That which it seizes shines out brightly,

That which it has left is turned to ashes.

Let us be the Keepers of the Fire,

Priests of its holy sanctuary,

Handing on the bright flame

Whose purifying influence gives a righteous life.

—Flurschütz.

"The girl to the left of the flame speaks:—

"Out of the dark distance are we come,  
The woes of many generations run in our veins,

The joys of our forefathers have been  
poured passionately into them,

The sufferings they felt are turned in us to  
strength.

We too will go into the darkness some day,  
When the river has poured through us,

When we have handed our brilliance and  
power in trust to our children:  
They live in our place.

"Music: Aria No. 10 from Mozart's "The Magic Flute."

"Address.

"The second girl on the right of the flame speaks:—

"Joy finds the path of love  
Better than all the mercy in the world.  
Love has gladly joined the pact  
So that it may not remain in loneliness.  
The fire's gleam glows,  
Burns into the heart  
Because we swear to be flames  
For the holy German Empire.

"Exchange of wreaths as in Marriage Ceremony No. 1.

"Music during the exchange of wreaths:  
"Norwegian Bridal Procession," by Grieg  
(can be abridged).

"The second girl on the left of the flame speaks:—

"Never has a nation struggled so bitterly.  
We die, we starve, we stand!  
Whoever extinguishes the holy flame,  
We will not see it.  
Straight ahead, we look not backwards,  
We do our bitter duty.  
If only there may still be happiness for  
our children.  
We are our own judges.

"Exchange of rings.

"During the exchange of rings Beethoven's song, "I Love Thee," is played by comrades on the piano, violin and two flutes tuned to scales C and F. As the words of the song are unsuitable for our ceremony, the words must be left out.

"A girl speaks:—

"You shall have faith in Germany's future  
and the resurrection of your nation.

Do not allow yourself to be deprived of this  
faith in spite of everything, everything  
that may happen.

And you shall act as if on you and your  
deeds alone

Depended the future of all things German  
And all the responsibility were yours.

"Finale: Community singing of 'Deutschland über alles' and the Horst Wessel song. Led by the children scattering flowers, the bridal couple leave the hall. The torchbearers and trumpeters remain standing until the couple have left the hall, when the flames are extinguished."